

School Bus Safety Fact Sheet

Approximately 400,000 Massachusetts students are transported by school buses annually. School buses are a relatively safe form of transportation and are associated with few injuries and deaths. The majority of school bus-related injuries are to pedestrians who are boarding/exiting a bus. They are hit by passing traffic or even by the bus driver, who cannot see them in the blind spots surrounding the bus. Children ages 4-7 are at highest risk of injury.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY GOALS

- educate children and parents on safe bus-riding behaviors and safe walking behaviors when getting on and off the bus;
- teach young children to take 5 giant steps (10 ft.) in front of the bus and to wait for the driver's signal before crossing.;
- reinforce safe behaviors on field trips;
- develop appropriate bus pick-up/drop-off policies;
- closely supervise children under age 10 who must cross the street after exiting the bus;
- conduct bus evacuation drills per Massachusetts law; and
- work with local traffic enforcement officer to ensure adherence to bus-related traffic laws and to slow traffic near schools.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Utilize curricula, A-V and age-appropriate student handouts, (crosswords, coloring sheets, posters) to teach and reinforce safe behaviors. Send take-home information to parents for family reinforcement. Teachers with younger children may wish to use props such as miniature traffic signs to engage children in bus safety activities.

RESOURCES: Safety officers, Us in a Bus curriculum, Thinking About School Bus Safety film, Otto the Auto series of videos, Pooh's Great School Bus Adventure video, handouts for children and parents

SPECIAL NOTE: Anyone interested in safety belts on school buses can address the issue on the district level; over twenty communities have developed local policies and regulations regarding safety belts on school buses. National School Bus Safety Week is the third week in October.

TRANSPORTATION LAWS: All pupils shall receive classroom instruction in school bus safety three times a year; during the first week of the school year, again before January 1, and at the end of the school year. Instruction will be according to the safety program prescribed by the Massachusetts Board of Education, and all pupils shall participate at least twice during the school year in on-bus emergency evacuation drills. (M.G.L. c.90 s.7B) Students and drivers of 7D vehicles (school transportation vans, and station wagons carrying not more than 8 students) are required to wear safety belts while transported in those vehicles. School bus drivers must wear safety belts when actually transporting students. The fine for illegally passing a school bus is a maximum of \$200. Repeat offenders may have their licenses suspended. If a community chooses to require safety belt installation in their school buses, the restraint system must comply with federal safety standards.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Injury Prevention and Control Program, DPH

Phone: 617-624-5413 Fax: 617-624-5075 Website: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/injury/>

Governor's Highway Safety Bureau's Child Passenger Safety Program

Phone: 617-725-3301 Website: <http://www.mass.gov/ghsb>

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Website: <http://www.nhtsa.gov>

American Academy of Pediatrics: Website: <http://www.aap.org>